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The Dramatic Element in the Popular Ballad

George Mary Miller

University Studies

of the University of Cincinnati

Series II. January-February 1905. Vol. 1, No. 1.

ISSUED BI-MONTHLY

The University of Cincinnati Press,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

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THE DRAMATIC ELEMENT IN THE POPULAR BALLAD.

I.

THE COMMON CONCEPTION OF THE BALLAD.

The great importance of folk-poetry from the standpoint of anthropology, of folk-lore, of the social and the artistic development of man has long been established. Moreover, the special connection of the popular ballad with the development of modern literature forces it upon the attention of all students of literature. Bishop Percy's famous collection of *Reliques* was not only an effect, a sign of the times; it had also a direct causal relation to the romantic outburst in the latter part of the eighteenth century in Germany and Great Britain. The great importance of the folk-ballad, then, furnishes the justification for the following investigation into a phase o fthe ballad hitherto practically ignored.

Within the last one hundred and fifty years this importance of folk-poetry has received abundant recognition through the host of persons who have collected and written about ballads. But most of those who have written upon the subject in recent years have not been so much concerned with classification and definition as with problems of origin, development, comparison, cross-connection and transmission. Classifications are always more or less unsatisfactory. We have no literary Gray's *Botany* by which poetic plants can be run down and pinned definitely in their places. We are often not certain of the genus, let alone the species. Moreover, since Darwin we have become more concerned with the origin of species and less with their classification. Apparently not many have cared, or thought it worth while to attempt exact definitions of the ballad; but such definitions as are found generally agree in the recognition of its epic element, some point out

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the lyric element, while nearly all wholly ignore any dramatic element.

A few typical definitions will make this plainer. In any discussion of the ballad Professor Child certainly has the right to speak first, and in Johnson's *Cyclopedia* we find him saying: "The word *ballad* in English signifies a narrative song, a short tale in lyric verse." J. F. Campbell has practically the same definition, "a bit of popular history, or a popular tale or romance, turned into verse which will fit some popular air."[1] Ritson, too, calls the ballad a "lyrical narrative,"[2] but in another place he has made the distinction between the song and the ballad which, Professor Gummere says, holds to-day, and here the ballad is "a mere narrative composition."[3] Murray's *New English Dictionary* says that a ballad is "a simple spirited poem, in short stanzas, in which some popular story is graphically narrated, . . . originally a popular song." *The Century Dictionary* defines the ballad as "a short narrative, . . . partly epic and partly lyric . . . a sort of minor epic." Webster's *International* calls it "a popular kind of narrative poem adapted for recitation or singing." Such typical definitions as these show how the popular ballad has been classed at different times within the last hundred years, and none of them makes mention of any dramatic element.

Professor Gummere has given us the latest and most comprehensive treatment of the subject in English, but he is one of those more interested in the origin of the ballad than in its classification. What he wants to emphasize is the distinction between popular and artistic poetry and the communal origin of of the former. He studies the ballad as "the crossed and disguised survival of folk-poetry."[4] He defines this "best representative of the whole class," the communal ballad, as "a narrative ballad of tradition which represents a community or folk, not a section or clan of that community, and not a single writer."[5] In this definition he ignores apparently both lyric and dramatic

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1. *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, IV: 123.
2. Quoted by Gummere, *Old English Ballads*, p. xxv.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ballad and Communal Poetry*, p. 52.
5. *Old English Ballads*, p. xxvii.

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elements. In another place he says that "ballads like 'Bonnie George Campbell' and 'Three Ravens' show a note of the lyric slowly detaching itself from pure narrative, just as 'Lord Randal' and 'Edward' lean to the dramatic."[6] Again in a discussion of "Later Ballads" he warns us that "we must note the gradual shading away of narrative ballads into ballads that are either *lyric* or *dramatic*. . . . When it begins to let emotion outweigh narrative, there we have a lyric ballad. When the persons of the story speak for themselves, we have a dramatic ballad."[7] In the same treatise the ballad is classed under the epic, and we are told that "we may use the same definition for the (narrative) folk song that we use for the early epic."[8] In his latest work, published in 1901, he makes clear that he always uses the word "ballad" as exactly equivalent to "traditional" or "communal narrative song."[9] Later, in discussing the differentiations of poetry into the three main types, lyric, epic and dramatic, he definitely classes "this ballad, or narrative song," under epic poetry.[10] It is certainly fair to infer, then, from Professor Gummere's more formal definitions and classifications that he considers any noteworthy dramatic element in the ballad, as well as lyric, a loss of its true popular character, a departure from the nature of the "pure" ballad.

Now it is my purpose to show that the dramatic element in the popular ballad is much more important than most definitions and discussions of the ballad would lead us to think. To treat the subject properly, it will be necessary to indicate briefly what is meant by "dramatic elements;" to consider more fully the origin and development of the ballad and closely related forms; and finally to analyze, with respect to their dramatic elements, popular ballads as they have come down to us.

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6. *Old English Ballads*, p. lxviii.
7. *Poetics*, p. 39.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
9. *Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 175 and Note 3.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 422-425.

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II.

THE NATURE OF DRAMATIC ELEMENTS.

The division of poetry into the three great types—epic, lyric, and dramatic—has been traditional since the time of Aristotle. It is true, of course, as Professor Gummere says, that "Metes and bounds are seldom clear,"[11] for there is no "simple norm for the distinction of epic, lyric and dramatic art;"[12] or, as Dr. Grosse puts it, that "a pure, lyric, epic or dramatic poetry has never been realized anywhere."[13] Yet the time-honored division still lives, is still accepted by practically all writers on literary subjects, for it represents real distinctions.

The classification of any poem under one of these three heads may be determined by a consideration of three points: first, its relation to its author; second, its content; third, its form. When we have decided to what degree the author's personality enters into the poem—whether he speaks in his own person, in the third person, or is entirely withdrawn; when we know what the subject matter is—objects, events, emotions, ideas, characters and the relation of these to each other; when we have determined the manner of outward expression; in short, when we have found out how the author meant form and content to appear to the audience—then we can classify the poem.

In the first place, to obtain dramatic effect the author must be absolutely out of sight. The ideal drama is wholly objective, wholly impersonal. In the lyric the author openly portrays himself; whatever the forms in which it appears, the lyric in reality is always in the first person, always subjective. In the epic the singer is a reporter interested in things outside of himself, so his narrative is necessarily in the third person; in a sense he is an actor visible on the stage, but so interested in something outside of himself that his audience lose sight of him for the thing he

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11. *Old English Ballads*, p. xvii.
12. Müllenhoff, *De Antiq.*, p. 3.
13. *Beginnings of Art*, p. 235.

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holds up before them. But if the dramatic puppets are to be real, if their actions are to convince, the wires connecting them with their mover must be invisible. On the psychological basis, then, on the basis of the relation of the author to his subject matter and to the method of its expression, the philosophical classification of Boeckh hardly seems adequate.[14] We can all agree that the lyric is subjective and the epic, largely at least, objective, but to call the drama "subjective-objective" seems to falsify the facts. Professor Gummere's definition of "an epic whole made up of lyric parts"[15] seems little better. The so-called "lyric outbursts"[16] of the drama in a strict sense are not subjective at all; for, voicing the feelings of the dramatic characters, so far as the author is concerned they are wholly impersonal. In a peculiar sense, then, impersonality is a vital dramatic element.

On the basis of content the chief dramatic elements are action and character. In the lyric, action, events, people, external objects are merely the occasions of personal emotion. Action is the chief element in both the epic and the drama, but the epic reports the events which make up the action as occurring in the past, while the drama presents them as taking place directly before our eyes. Character in the epic is portrayed largely by the help of objective description and narration; but in the drama the characters present themselves directly to the audience wholly through their own speech and action. Moreover, the action of the epic affords a "multiplictiy of plots,"[17] each one of which might serve for a complete dramatic action. As a whole, then, dramatic action, as distinguished from epic action, must be characterized to a high degree by rapidity of movement, condensation of events, emphasis on essentials, a more spirited conflict, a more lively suspense, a more striking surprise, a more thrilling climax; while dramatic character, as distinguished from epic character, is self portrayed.

The most marked characteristics of dramatic form are scenic structure and dialogue; but its one essential is dialogue.[18] Drama

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14. *Encyclopädie*, pp. 144-146 and 648 ff.
15. *Poetics*, p. 58.
16. Crawshaw, *Inter. of Lit.*, p. 34.
17. Butcher's *Aristotle's Poetics*, p. 67.
18. Cf. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, I., p. 77, and II., p. 209.

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may be in poetry or prose or both; it may have acts and scenes, chorus and monologue or not. But for the self-portrayal of a plurality of characters and for the complete representation of a dramatic story there must be dialogue. Of course on the stage character may be portrayed and story acted through gesture alone, but that is pantomime, not drama. It is true, too, that the epic and the lyric make use of quoted speeches, but the long-winded addresses of the former and the subjective intention of the latter can hardly be called dialogue in a true sense. Dialogue, therefore, is essentially a dramatic form.

To summarize, then, it appears that the essentials of the dramatic type are complete impersonality, as regards the author, in a story presented immediately by characters who speak and act for themselves.

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III.

PRIMITIVE POETRY AND ITS RELATION TO THE BALLAD.

This preliminary discussion of the common conception of the popular ballad and of the nature of dramatic elements has merely cleared the ground for a more direct investigation of the question in hand—the extent of the dramatic element in the ballad. It will be well to discuss this more important question first from the historical standpoint. In order to understand the ballad as it has come down to us it is necessary to study its origin and development. The end to be sought here, therefore, is to see what the relation of the ballad is to the poetic stuff out of which it originated and to see how far dramatic elements entered into these original poetic forms.

The evidence seems overwhelming that the primitive choric song and dance is the artistic protoplasm out of which the various forms of poetry have developed. Few will now care to dispute the fact that there are two great classes of poetry, artistic and popular, "poetry of the schools and poetry of the people." Whatever critics may hold as to the origin of popular poetry, they are agreed that, being in the possession of the folk, it is therefore different from artistic poetry. Professor Gummere says that popular poetry has in general assumed three forms—the epos, the song and the ballad;[19] and the last he says definitely is the "best representative of the whole class,[20] it is "the nearest approach to primitive poetry preserved among civilized nations."[21] He declares that ballads are "the crossed and disguised survival of folk-poetry,"[22] while the latter was the "survival of prehistoric gregarious or communal song, the verse of the horde." There are still those, like Professor Courthope,[23] Mr. Newell,[24] and

19. *Old English Ballads*, p. xvi.
20. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
21. *Beginnings of Poetry*. p. 180.
22. *Bal. and Com. Poetry*, p. 52.
23. *A History of English Poetry*, London, 1897, Vol. I., pp. 445-468.
24. *Proceedings*, International Folk-Lore Congress, 1891, p. 64.

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Mr. G. Gregory Smith,[25] who dispute this chain of descent. No doubt some of the links are as hard to supply as some of those the natural scientist has sought so long;[26] but, in spite of the scientist's failure to find all the links sought, the general doctrine of evolution has been accepted because it gives the best explanation of the known facts in the natural world. Now neither literature nor any other art is exempt from the universal law of evolution. Literature, poetry, the ballad, cannot be exceptions to the law that has governed the development of the physical universe; the development of organic life in plant and animal; the development of mankind in mind and morals, in social organization, in government and in religion. Everywhere the law holds of the development from the simple, the homogeneous, the undifferentiated, to the complex, the heterogeneous, the differentiated. It is not within the province of this paper to prove that such is the line of development accounting for the ballad. Professor Gummere has stated the case for such development with sufficient completeness in the *Introduction* to his *Old English Ballads,* in his paper on *The Ballad and Communal Poetry* and in his latest and most exhaustive work, *The Beginnings of Poetry.* It is, to say the least, the latest and best working hypothesis, and, like the general theory of evolution of which it is a part, it may be assumed true until a better offer or contradictory facts make it untenable.[27] It is safe to assume, then, that written literature has developed from oral literature, that folk-literature developed into artistic literature. If we would understand the ballad, even in the modified state in which it has come down to us, we must go back to pure folk-poetry uninfluenced by artistry, for it is largely this primitive poetic matter that gives to the ballad its distinguishing characteristics.

If, then, the popular ballad has developed out of ancient choric poetry, a discussion of the nature of this primitive poetic stuff will be directly in point for this investigation. Now all witnesses agree that the primitive æsthetic expression known as

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25. *The Transition Period*, New York, 1900, pp. 181-235.
26. *Old English Ballads*, p. xxi.
27. Cf. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. I., p. 25, and p. 63, Note 3.

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the choric dance was a union of epic, lyric and dramatic elements. "It includes in itself," says Müllenhoff, to quote from his awkward Latin, "in a certain remarkable way, elements and beginnings of epic and dramatic poetry and that which we call lyric poetry."[28] As Professor Gummere puts it, "In fact, the three arts—poetry, music, dancing—were once united in a single art"; and "for the oldest times they were inseparable."[29] "Thus we have seen," says Letourneau, in his summary of literary evolution, "the men of all countries and all races beginning in literary aesthetics by blending into an indissoluble trinity mimicry, music and poetry; or, in other words, song and scenic dance."[30] These last two words help to define Müllenhoff's "dramatic poetry" and Professor Gummere's "dancing." The latter has pointed out how necessary it is to disabuse our minds of all modern notions of authorship if we are to be able to conceive of communal authorship at all.[31] It is just as necessary to throw away our modern notions of the ball-room dance if we wish to understand primitive "dancing." Moulton's statement is especially happy here. In his account of the origin of the Greek drama, he says: "The Ballad Dance, the fundamental medium out of which all varieties of literature have developed, . . . consists in a combination of speech, music, and that imitative gesture, which, for want of a better word, we are obliged to call dancing." This last was "an art which used bodily motion to convey thought; as in speech the tongue articulated words, so in dancing the body swayed and gesticulated into meaning."[32] Newell, too, makes the distinction between the civilized dance, "mere lively movement," and the original dance, "the dramatized expression of any feature of nature or life which excited interest."[33] Wallaschek says that "primitive dances have in most cases a special meaning: they have to represent something," and that the primitive union of music and the mimetic dance "is not an occasional union of two different arts, it is originally one organism and at the same

28. *De Antiq.*, p. 3.
29. *Poetics*, p. 1.
30. *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, 43: 674.
31. *Old English Ballads*, p. xcvi.
32. *Ancient Classical Drama*, p. 3.
33. *Games and Songs*, p. 10.

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time the earliest manuifestation of human art in general."[34] In the summary statement of Tylor, the anthropologist, "At low levels in civilization it is clear that dancing and play acting are one."[35]

Such is the general testimony of only a few of the expert witnesses that might be called in support of the primitive union of the three great poetic types into one art of expression. The mass of particular evidence in support of this position is too great to cite here, yet it will be allowable to bring forward in support of the general proposition some more specific examples.

Primitive poetry among the ancients is always combined with the song and the mimetic dance. The old Hindus in the prevedic period, in the time of the clans, used choric song and dance;[36] Posnett points out that the Sanskrit term for "drama" (nataka) properly applies to "dancing."[37] The same communal artistic expression is found among the old Hebrews. After the crossing of the Red Sea, Miriam led in the song of praise and "all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam *answered* them,"[38]—a clear case of the choral song and dance developed so far as to have a *vorsinger* for the responsive dialogue singing. And again, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing to meet King Saul. . . . And the women *answered one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands."[39] Primitive choric poetry among the Greeks is still better known. As Moulton points out, the dithyramb, the historic parent of Greek tragedy, was not properly a "chorus" in the Greek sense, but the more primitive communal "comus" or processional ballad dance.[40] In Haigh's vivid description they "danced in a ring round the smoking altar, chanting their recital of the god's adventures, and exhibiting each phase of the story with such passionate realism of gesture as to make the spectators almost be-

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34. *Primitive Music*, p. 214.
35. *Anthropology*, p. 298.
36. Letourneau, *L'évol. littér.*, p.331, and Müllenhoff, *De Antiq.*, p. 3.
37. *Comp. Lit.*, p. 121.
38. *Ex.*. 15:20-21.
39. I. *Sam.*, 18:6-7.
40. *Anc. Clas. Drama*, p. 9.

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lieve they were present not at the mere narrative, but at the occurrence of the events."[41] Practically the same elements are found in the earliest Germanic poetry. Müllenhoff's statement is very positive: "These sacred songs, as testimony proves, in popular usage were not recited by rhapsodists or individual persons, but were always acted and sung by a chorus or many people at once,"[42] and the remainder of his treatise abundantly bears him out.

But it is not alone among ancient peoples we find illustrations of the general law. The life of primitive man in our own day is rich in examples Letourneau's great work, *L'evolution litteraire dans les diverses races humaines,* might almost be said to be devoted to the proof of the proposition already quoted from him as to the indissoluble trinity of primitive literary aesthetics.[43] His investigation has covered the whole world, ancient and modern, and scientists and travelers and such contemporary writers on primitive art as Wallaschek, Hirn and Groos, everywhere support him.

The only apparent exception to the general rule among primitive peoples to-day seems to be in the case of the natives of Terra del Fuego, where the only aesthetic expression reported is a rudimentary song, an indefinite repetition of a single word.[44] But in view of the facts everywhere else, Letourneau suggests that perhaps the observations of travelers have not been sufficiently searching. However, no such suggestion is needed elsewhere. Among the Australians, "At first these songs never separate themselves from gesture, they are always spoken pantomimes,"[45] and "the dances were always mimetic."[46] The same law holds good among the Papuans of New Caledonia and the New Hebrides,[47] while the literary aesthetics of the Hottentots, better even than that of the Australians, "attests the close primitive relation of poetry, dance and music."[48]

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41. *Tragic Drama of the Greeks,* p. 14.
42. *De Antiq,,* p. 5.
43. See above, p. 11.
44. Letourneau, *L'évol. lit.,* p. 110.
45. *L'évol.,* p. 28.
46. *Ibid,,* p. 34.
47. *Ibid.,* p. 39.
48. *Ibid.,* p. 55.

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So much for the black race. But the yellow race, though generally more advanced, still shows the primitive union of story, music and action. It is still found in Thibet.[49] Among the Esquimaux "word and chant are always supported by gestures and cries,"[50] a statement based on the report of Dr. Boas in the *Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology,* 1884-5. The mass of material collected by the Bureau of Ethnology and by such special students as J. W. Fewkes and Miss Alice C. Fletcher[51] and others, bears out Letourneau when he says that, rich and important as the literature of the American Indian is, it is "still, in a large measure, chanted and even associated with the dance."[52] It is still the essentially collective literature of the primitive republican clan, and "this collective character is especially striking in the dance, invariably accompanied by a choral chant and always mimetic." All these mimetic dances—the pipe dance, the war dance, the buffalo dance, etc.—"these ballets with song, show us a perfect model of primitive literature, of literature of the clan." From this array of evidence, ancient and modern, it seems clear that the dramatic element is an essential part of primitive literary expression.

But not only is the dramatic element an essential part of the earliest literary expression, it may, in so far as a primacy of elements can be asserted of comparatively undifferentiated forms, be called also the most important element. It has been held that the dramatic element in poetry was a later development than the other poetic types. This view probably obtained because it was known that the drama came to a full development as a separate form both among the Greeks and in Mediæval Europe later than the epic and the lyric. But the later development of the specialized literary type called "drama" does not mean that very important dramatic elements were not present in literature much earlier. Indeed, the facts seem to give the dramatic elements priority. It is by articulate language that man is chiefly distinguished from other animals. But in the other elements of his first literary expression he is connected

49. *L'évol.*, p. 176.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
51. *Study of Summer Ceremonies*, and *Omaha Indian Music.*
52. *L'évol. lit.*, p. 111.

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with his animal relatives.[53] In a review of Letourneau's *L'evolution litteraire,* D. F. Hannigan says: "The primitive art common alike to man and many of the lower animals is the mimic dance. The earliest type of human being was a dancing animal."[54] Birds both sing and dance, and it is only in language the lowest savages may claim much superiority over them. Moreover, vocal sounds and gestures are at first equally reflexive acts.[55] From the origin of our species cries, not yet articulate, were probably associated with gesture and mimicry for their interpretation. Long before they can speak children express themselves by cries and gestures, and they understand our gestures before our speech. And it is a commonplace of science that primitive men are but the infants of civilization.

Now primitive literary expression seems to show a similar state of affairs. As Letrourneau says, articulate speech begins by being the least important member of the primitive aesthetic trinity; it is a simple accessory of the song and imitative dance. In the language of Hirn, "As an outward sign of thought, action is more immediate than words," while used in the widest sense, "drama can be spoken of as the earliest of the imitative arts . . . . perhaps it is even older than language itself."[56] Common among savages is a "species of romances without words, traces of an ancient interjectional poetry, which probably preceded spoken poetry."[57] The interjectional refrains of savage songs and of our own popular songs are evidently survivals of this inarticulate poetry, "the primitive text of the hymn."[58] It was the dramatic dance that molded the first song and the first poetry; it was the "origin of all songs of the people."[59] The songs of savages everywhere bear witness to the small relative importance of articulate speech. Citing from Schoolcroft an account of the Sioux ceremony in honor of Ha-o-kah (The Giant), Posnett says,

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53. Cf. Groos, *The Play of Animals* and *The Play of Man.*
54. *Westminster Review,* 141: 400.
55. Letournaeu, *Pop. Sci. Mo.,* 43: 674.
56. *The Origin of Art,* p. 150.
57. Letourneau, *Pop. Sci. Mo.,* 43: 674.
58. Cf. Gummere, *O. E. B.* pp. xxxvii and xxxviii, and R. M. Myer, *Zeit. f. vergl. Lit..* I: 34-47.
59. *Old English Ballads,* lxxv.

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"Here, and in many like cases, it is clear that the words of the magic song are altogether of secondary importance—the magic symbolism of the dance and gesture is nearly everything,"[60] and such reseaches as Miss Fletcher's give this statement abundant support. Moreover, it is less the pleasure of the rythmical motion of dance and song that savages want, sensitive to this as they are, than that of scenic mimicry, of an expressive spectacle giving the idea of a hunt, of a battle, of the acts of a god. It is this that satisfies "the very lively psychical want, that of projecting mental images outward, of reproducing with all the relief of reality what exists in the brain only in a state of recollection or desire."[61] If, as Dr. Grosse says, "the peculiar feature of the drama is the representation of an event simultaneously by speech and by mimicry,"[62] we certainly can agree with him that the drama is the earliest literary type, and Wallaschek is right when he says that "the historical order of all branches of poetry does not begin with the epos . . . but with the drama, lyric coming next, the epos last."[63]

Now, according to Professor Gummere, consevative critics admit that the ballad was "the universal primitive form of poetry of the people."[64] Even a cursory acquaintance with the three chief forms of popular poetry, the epic, the song and the ballad, will convince one that Professor Gummere is right in calling the ballad the best representative of the whole class. There is less of the artistic element in the ballad than in even the most popular of the epics, while the individual tone of the popular song indicates a departure further from the primitive communal type of literature than the ballad shows in its supreme objectivity. If, then, the ballad is that survival of popular poetry most closely connected with the origin of the latter, from the very great importance of the dramatic element in primitive poetry, should we not expect it to be an important element in the ballad? On *a priori* grounds the presumption is very strong in favor of this proposition.

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60. *Comp. Lit.*, p. 102.
61. Letourneau, *Pop. Sci. Mo.*, 43: 680.
62. *Beginnings of Art*, p. 265.
63. *Primitive Music*, p. 214.
64. *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxxiv.

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IV.

THE DRAMATIC RENDITION OF THE BALLAD AND THE RELATION OF THE BALLAD TO THE FOLK-DRAMA.

Fortunately we do not have to depend on antecedent probability alone to show the dramatic element in the ballad; the argument from origins is only the first step. There is the best of evidence that the ballad has always been connected with song and the dramatic dance, that it has been felt to be dramatic by those among whom it has flourished. All critics will agree with Professor Gummere that "an unsung ballad may go for a contradiction in terms."[65] Moreover the ballad song has been the special property of the dance. In the words of Müllenhoff, "The dance song remains the center of all folk-poetry."[66]

The rendering of these ballad dances was always strongly dramatic. In an illuminating passage, with ample material from the old French popular ballads to support it, Jeanroy says, "These dance songs were eminently dramatic; they were so first by their brusque and lively way of putting the personage into the scene, and the almost complete suppression of narration for the sake of the dialogue; they were still more so by the manner in which they were sung, we could almost say played."[67] On the next page he assures us that "A crowd of refrains indicate to us that the action was often played in reality. These replies exchanged between the chorus and the soloist constituted a veritable drama." Professor Child notes of the French parallel to the English ballad, *Our Goodman*, that, "the lace makers of Vorey are wont to recite or sing this ballad winter evenings as a little drama. So the young girls in Lorraine during the carnival; and the young fellows in Provence."[68] Müllenhoff describes the dances to

65. *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxii.
66. *Sagen, Märchen und Lieder*, p. XXV.
67. *Les origines*, p. 393.
68. V:90.

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which the old German ballads were sung "as a lively accompaniment of the song according to its contents and its form."[69] Valentin speaks of the "pantomimic representation or complete dramatization"[70] of the old Swedish folk songs and instances the ballad "Herr Carl gick für sin foster mor," as "performed dramatically up to recent times." It is Vogler's testimony that in the ballad dance of the Faroe Islanders, "One can see in the behavior of the dancers that they are not indifferent to what the song is about, but take pains while they dance to express its varying contents by demeanor and gesture";[71] and this is almost word for word the language of Lyngbye.[72] In the ballad dance of the Frisians, "The dramatic action was considerable," while in the ballad itself "dialogue abounds."[37] Ralston's account of the choral dance, the Khorovod, in Russian villages, shows that the Russian folk-songs are always connected with dramatic expression; the Khorovod is "at once canvas and frame" for the "versified domestic dramas."[74] Letourneau (citing A. Rambaud, *Russie Epique,* p. 56) says that in these Russian ballad dances, "Ordinarily two persons strike up a dialogue chant, while the circle which surrounds them plays the part of chorus."[75] In a very interesting section the same authority points out the close connection between the popular songs and customs of Modern Greece and Ancient Greece.[76] Of the popular songs of Modern Greece those intended for the dance are the ballads, and the dance accompanying them is always mimetic. Each dance generally has its special songs. New ballads never fit the ancient dances, but are accompanied by new mimetic dances, "which are born and die with them." Going to the other side of the world, we find that even in Japan the folk-song is conceived and rendered dramatically. Lafcadio Hearn, speaking of a particular song, says: "Yesterday the apprentice, a lad of fifteen, and the master of the wash-

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69. *Sagen, u.s.w.*, p. XXIV.
70. *Studien*, pp. 46-47.
71. *Färöischen Lieder von Sigurd*, p. 6.
72. Quoted in *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxvi.
73. *Ibid.*, p. lxxviii.
74. *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 3.
75. *L'évol. lit.*, p. 449.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 389 ff.

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ermen, were singing alternately as if answering each other."[77] But we need not go so far from home for examples. Professor Child quotes S. Baring Gould in a reference to a version of the *Elfin Knight:* "This used to be sung as a sort of game in farm-houses, between a young man who went outside the room and a girl who sat on the settle or a chair, and a sort of chorus of farm lads and lasses."[78]

These examples certainly satisfy the expectation raised by the nature of primitive poetry and the intimate relation held to exist between it and the ballad. The *a priori* reasoning based on the evidence brought out in the discussion of origins is confirmed by the facts. It is a historical fact that primitive poetry, developed to the ballad stage, still maintained the primitive union of choral song and dance. The ballad dance was still not merely rhythmical, but prevailingly dramatic. It is evident from these accounts of ballad rendition that the ballads themselves are felt by the folk as dramatic.

The fact that many of the ballads in such collections as Professor Child's were taken down from mere recitation does not militate against this view. We must remember that the early part of the last century and the latter part of the eighteenth were very far from being typical ballad times. The folk were becoming too sophisticated to maintain the old customs of ballad rendition. It is only among people less affected by the progress of western civilization that we may expect to find conditions similar to those that existed in England and Scotland in the heyday of the ballad. It is among such people as the Faroe Islanders, or under such conditions as the Russian *mir* affords, that we can find the best modern parallels to the true ballad age of society.[79] Freedom from western influences, from "progress," has enabled the Russian peasants not only to preserve their primitive institutions, their communal life, but also to keep their peculiar youthfulness of character and mental organization which allows the dramatic ballad dance still to flourish. It is reasonable to believe, then, from such conditions as we see among peoples still in the ballad stage, and from such survivals as that mentioned by Baring

77. *Atlan. Mo.*, 78:347.
78. IV: 439, b.
79. Cf. Letourneau, *L'évol. lit.*, p. 448.

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Gould, that the dramatic conception of the ballad by the folk was once the rule in England and Scotland as well as elsewhere.

Moreover, ballads have probably had a more direct connection with the drama than that found in the informal dramatic action of the ballad dance. The probable influence of the ballad on the origin and development of the church plays and possibly on certain phases of the Elizabethan drama will be discussed in an appendix.[80] But, though the influence of the ballad on these two phases of the drama may be passed over for the time being, there can be no doubt about the importance for my main thesis of the direct connection between the ballads and the early popular secular drama.

The importance of folk literature in general to the student of literary origins and development has had a large recognition; yet English-writing scholars, at least, have given but scanty attention to a very important phase of popular literature, the folk-drama. It is only recently that signs of a change have begun to make their appearance. The most notworthy evidence of this change is the two-volume work of Mr. E. K. Chambers on *The Mediaeval Stage*, published only this last year. With such a broad subject as the whole mediaeval dramatic development up to the time of the regular drama in the sixteenth century, it is significant that, leaving out of account the long appendices, he has given by far the larger part of his space to a consideration of the folk-drama. Such a proportion is, no doubt, startling to the conventional critic of the English drama; but a reader of Chambers' first volume is given such a mass of well-authenticated facts[81] that at its end he is forced to see the great importance of folk-drama in mediaeval life. To quote the author's own words, the reason for such an extended account of the various phases of the folk-drama is that "their substantial contribution to mediaeval and Renaissance drama is greater than has been fully recognized."[82]

It may be granted, without impairing my argument, that these plays are not in their present state wholly folk productions. No one denies that the ballads in the Child collection have been affected by artistry. They are the "crossed and disguised" sur-

80. See *Appendix A.*
81. See especially Vol. I., pp. 89-227.
82. *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 90.

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vivals of folk-poetry, not pure survivals wholly uncontaminated by individual art. And so with folk-plays; one reason why we have them preserved at all is that artistry, to a certain extent, took them in charge and then recorded them. But, though we can not say that they were not affected by artistry, they were still in origin and use the property of the folk. "They are properly called folk-drama," says Chambers, "because they are derived, with the minimum of literary invention, from the dramatic tendencies latent in the folk festivals of a very primitive type."[83]

Now the same authority states definitely that "the evolution of folk-drama out of folk-dance may be most completely studied through a comparison of the various types of the European sword-dance with the mummers', guisers' or pace-eggers' play of St. George."[84] After the evidence he presents, such a statement seems unassailable; but he does not point out clearly all the implications of this proposition. He makes it quite clear that such dramatic pieces as the St. George plays and the Revesby sword-play[85] go back to earlier sword-dances. But, from what we have seen in Section III. of this paper, it is equally clear that every folk-dance had its appropriate choral song; it was true not only that in earlier times every ballad had its dance, but also that every dance had its ballad. It was only in a period of comparatively late development that a ballad could exist without a dance or a dance without a ballad. To go backward, then, along the course of evolution, the conclusion seems inevitable that the various sword-plays would find their origin first in a ballad and its dance,[86] and finally in the more primitive choral song and dance.

Luckily we have left three Robin Hood plays[87] to show what must have been an important class of folk-dramas, and here the connection with the ballad should be apparent to all. Yet Chambers objects to calling the Robin Hood plays folk-drama "in any proper sense of the word." "They were written," he says, "not

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83. Work cited, Vol. I., p. 190.
84. *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 190.
85. See for texts, Manly, *Pre-Shaksperian Drama*, Vol. I., pp. 289-311.
86. Note Chambers' own citation of the connection between the folk sword-dance and *cantilenae* in Sweden, I., p. 191.
87. Child, III., pp. 90, 114, and 127; and Manly, *Pre-Shaksperian Drama*, I., p. 279 ff.

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by the folk themselves, but by the *trouveres* or minstrels *for* the folk; and at a period when the independent evolution of the religious play had already set a model of dramatic composition."[88] Moreover, he denies that it is possible to establish "any direct affiliation between the Robin Hood plays and the earlier *caroles* on the same theme. The existing Robin Hood ballads," he continues, "are certainly not *caroles;* they are probably not folk-song at all, but minstrelsy of a somewhat debased type."[89] Now in this last sentence he lumps all the Robin Hood ballads together, thus failing to discriminate, as Professor Child does so carefully,[90] between the early Robin Hood ballads and the late broadside versions. Two-thirds of the Robin Hoods ballads in the Child collection are classed by Professor Child himself as "debased minstrelsy," stall-fed imitations, and it is only among these last that a definite place is given to Maid Marian, the origin of whom is one of the things Chambers is interested in clearing up. But, though influenced somewhat by artistry, as all ballads that we have left are, the other third are real traditional ballads of the best sort. In another place Chambers sketches the evolution of the folk-drama from folk-song and dance, in substance exactly descriptive, though he refuses to see it, of the case in hand. "The dance of modern savages," he says here, "took shape in primitive dramas of war, hunting, love, religion, labor, or domestic life. Doubtless that was the case also with the *caroles* of the European festivals. The types of *chanson* most immediately derived from these are full of dialogue and already on the point of bursting into drama.[91] One cannot ask a better statement of dramatic evolution than this. It is his confusion of the mass of "debased minstrelsy" on the subject of Robin Hood and of the real traditional ballads on the same theme that prevents him from seeing the facts in the case. The facts are that the earlier traditional Robin Hood ballads are just such *chansons* as he describes, going back to just such more primitive *caroles* or choric dances.

If our account of the popular ballad so far has been correct,

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88. Work cited, I., p. 182.
89. I., p. 178. But cf. the suggestion of such connection in the "Robene hude" dance.
90. Vol. III., *passim.*
91. Work cited, I., p. 188.

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it seems certain, then, that such plays as the three Robin Hood fragments grew directly out of the ballads. The Robin Hood *chansons*, "full of dialogue and already on the point of bursting into drama," did burst into drama. No one would say that the more specialized dramatic form came first; and, from what we know of the times, a hero and his deeds would scarcely become the permanent literary passion of the folk, except through a ballad. In this case the ballads and the plays have the same persons and largely the same situations, a case furnishing an argument exactly parallel to the one Chambers uses to establish the continuity of the earlier sword-dance and the St. George plays.[92] As Mr. Newell says, it only needed the assignment of different parts to different actors to turn the ballad into a drama.[93] We know that "Robene hude" was danced,[94] which means acted of a fashion. Professor Child says definitely, "We know from various sources that plays, founded on the ballads, were some times performed in the course of the (May) games,"[95] and on the next page he asserts that "the two Robin Hood plays . . . so far as they go, are based on the ballads." It seems no less certain that the third fragment, *Robin Hood and the Knight*, is founded on *Guy of Gisborne*.[96] Professor Gayley, in his *Historical View of English Comedy*, accepts the Robin Hood dramatic fragments as definitely proving "that some kind of drama was made out of the ballads."[97] Robert Chambers says that "*Andrew Lammie* used in formed times to be presented in dramatic shape at rustic meetings in Aberdeenshire."[98] In a note to *Willie's Lyke-Wake*, Professor Child says, "This, says Afzelius, 1814, is one of the commonest ballads in Sweden, and is often represented as a drama by the young people in country places."[99] Such clear cases as these make it certain that the popular ballads were easily turned into popular plays.

92. Work cited, I., p. 207.
93. *Games and Songs*, p. 9.
94. Cited in Gummere, *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxviii, and in Chambers, I., p. 178.
95. III., p. 45.
96. Child, III., pp. 44 and 90.
97. *Representative English Comedies. From the Beginnings to Shakespeare.* New York, 1903. p. xl.
98. Quoted in Child, IV., p. 301.
99. I., p. 249.

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We are not to think, however, that the small number of secular folk-plays preserved for us is any just indication of the number originally in existence—far from it. They were necessarily more ephemeral than the religious plays. Ballad plays could be made up at short notice from ballads perfectly well known to all and a new one adapted for every village merry-making. When they became more or less permanent they would still be handed down by tradition, not committed to writing. Religious plays, however, on account of their sacred character, their original authorship by a lettered class, and their greater complexity, would always be written. So few folk-plays have been preserved, partly for the same reason that we have so little popular poetry of any kind—and practically no ballads—handed down from Anglo-Saxon times.[100]. Throughout mediaeval times the means for preserving literature was in the hands of a caste wholly intolerant of the rudimentary literary efforts of the folk. The austerer clergy had always done their best to uproot all art and banish all amusements that could not show a Christian origin. Choral song and dance, ballads and folk-dramas smacked too much of heathen origin; their rendition suggested heathen rites too clearly for the good fathers to assist in their preservation. Those members of the lettered class who were less troubled by religious scruples were of no more assistance in the preservation of folk literature. The work of "wanton freres" and followers of Golias would not be preserved in monastery libraries, while clerks "of Oxenford," whose whole thought was only "of Aristotle and his philosophye," were intellectual aristocrats to whom folk-song and folk-drama would be an intellectual abomination. Hence the mass of mediaeval ballads and folk-plays was ignored by the only class who kept records. They were either stamped out by ecclesiastical punishments or were purposely left to die the natural death of all traditional and oral art. Knowing the strong tendency of the folk toward the dramatic, we should be unreasonable to doubt, therefore, that the few St. George plays and mummeries and the Robin Hood plays still preserved to us are merely specimens of what must have been a large and important class of secular plays

100. Cf. Gummere, *Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 278, and *Primitive Poetry and the Ballad* in *Modern Philology*, Jan. 1904, p. 385 f.

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existing in ballad times and contemporary with the early church plays.

If, then, the rendition of the ballad itself was dramatic, and if a secular folk-drama grew directly out of the ballad-dance and the ballad itself, it seems certain that by those to whom it furnished almost their only artistic pleasure the dramatic element of the ballad was both felt and expressed. The popular ballad was conceived, was intended, to minister directly to the instinct of the folk of the dramatic.

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V.

THE TRADITIONAL SINGING GAMES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS PARALLELS TO THE BALLAD.

There are still other survivals besides the mediaeval folk-drama, which tend to confirm the belief that the folk always thought of the ballad as largely dramatic. A very important class of such survivals is found in the singing and dancing games of children and young people. That these singing games are actually survivals from more primitive times is the confident assertion of a number of witnesses. We have Professor Child's authority that children's games are "the last stage of many old ballads."[101] Professor Gummere quotes this with approval, and adds "also the last stage of many an old dance";[102] but, from our point of view, this last statement goes without saying, since ballad and dance were always united. H. Morf, in a discussion of the French folk-song, says, "Im Mittelalter kannten die Erwachsenen keinen anderen Tanz als den Reigen, den man zum Rythmus von *Liedern* tanzte. Dieses *danser aux chansons* ist heute aus den sitten des Volkes geschwunden und zum blossen Spiel der Kinder herabgesunken. Damit ist auch so manches Lied, in das vor Jahrhunderten erwachsene Menschen ihre Freude und ihr Leid gegossen, zum Kinderreim geworden und hat im Kindermund ein letztes Asyl gefunden."[103] Groos asserts that children of civilized peoples still keep many heathen customs among their plays, because these dancing and singing games date from the Middle Ages or even go back "to old German religious dances with a cycle of songs in honor of the goddess Freija."[104] But no

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101. II., p. 346.
102. *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxx., N. 2.
103. *Arch. f. das Studium der Neueren Sprachen u. Literaturen*, Sept., 1903, p. 153.
104. *The Play of Man*, pp. 304 and 350.

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more testimony is needed to show the descent of the singing games from the mediaeval choric dance-songs.

That children should preserve lore and customs formerly belonging to the whole community is not to be wondered at. Children pass through the artistic as well as the other historical stages of the race. The desire for the concrete, the instinct for mimicry, the necessity for vizualization, all that the child's phrase "play-like" means—these are the mental qualities of the primitive and the ballad ages. To a child dramatization is as much a necessity as it was to the folk. Active mental states must have physical expression, stories must be acted. Moreover, children perennially manifest the conserving power of earlier times. They learn their games as they learn their language, by tradition. As Mr. Newell says, "it is the necessity of general currency and the difficulty of obtaining it which restricts the variation of one and of the other."[105] But the quaintness of the old formulas, the mystery within them appeals to the child mind as well; the "way" of the game is as sacred to the child as his rune to the Finn.

Now, children imitate all parts of the lives of their elders—[106] they "keep house," they work, they go to war, they worship, they love, they marry, they die and are buried. It is not strange, then, that they should imitate the amusements of grown people, provided they have a chance to know what they are.[107] In the earlier time, when the whole community "danced to their own fun," as Professor Gummere puts it, the amusements of the grown people certainly came more within the knowledge of the children than they do at present. If grown people and youths sang and danced ballads, the children would do so too. Mr. Newell declares that "in singing and playing love tales the children rather imitated their elders than followed a necessity of their own nature."[108] If, then, we consider their almost marvellous appetite for traditional lore and their power of perpetuating it, if we consider how well suited this particular kind of amusement is to them, we shall not be surprised to find a striking similarity between their rounds, their singing games and dances, and the primitive choral dance and even the ballads themselves.

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105. *Games and Songs*, p. 27.
106. Cf. Groos, *The Play of Man*, p. 303.
107. *Ibid*,, p. 304.
108. Work cited, p. 64.

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That the singing games of children and young people have a direct connection with ballads is proved by their known performance of particular ballads. Besides those already cited,[109] we know definitely, for example, that a version of *The Maid Freed from the Gallows* was played by young girls about 1840,[110] and that a German parallel of *Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight* was performed as a children's game called *Bertha im Wald*, in Tübingen, in 1851.[111] Mr. Newell is our authority that *Barbara Allen* was used by New England children as a dancing game and as a dance at evening parties in the first quarter of the century, "the latest English survival, in cultivated society, of a practice which had once been universal."[112] He also tells us that, much to his surprise, he came across a group of colored children in New York City singing (and presumably playing) a garbled version of *Sir Hugh or The Jew's Daughter*.[113] It is worth noting, too, that so careful an observer of children as Kate Douglas Wiggin has her "grown ups" in *Penelope's Progress* assist some Scottish children, who have started the game, to play *Sir Patrick Spens* and other ballads. This is at the very end of the nineteenth century, but we have authentic evidence that it was the custom of children to use the ballads for games and plays over three hundred years ago. Professor Child quotes from a petition, in 1578, of the fourth session of the General Assembly of the Scottish Church to the king and council to discharge "all kynd of insolent playis, as King of May, Robin Hood, and sick others in the moneth of May, played either by bairnes at the schools, or others."[114] Such a list as this could probably be amplified by further investigation, but enough have been mentioned for our purpose.

But, as Mr. Newell points out,[115] most singing games with apparent ballad connections cannot be referred so definitely to known ballads. In these merely the ballad situation is retained, and the remainder of the text refers to the action of the dance. Such is the opening of the familiar *King William was King*

109. Cf. Section IV., p. 24-25.
110. Child, II., 346 and 354.
111. *Ibid.* I., 33, note; and E.H.Meier, *Deutsche Kinder-Reime*, p.144.
112. *Games and Songs*, p. 78.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
114. III., p. 45.
115. *Games and Songs*, p. 9.

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James's Son.[116] The remainder of the ballad is suggested by the verses of the same round, as played in Ireland, where, after coming from the war, "King William" seeks the girl he had promised to marry before leaving, and she disguises herself to test his love; while Scandinavian folk-ballads, embodying exactly the same situation, are based on a known historical occurrence of the thirteenth century. Mrs. Gomme suggests that *Isabella* had a similar ballad origin,[117] and the sections of Mr. Newell's *Games and Songs*, which he calls "Love Games" and "Histories," have many bits of plays that suggest the ballad origin. *Miss Jennia Jones*, we are told, was "originally a love tale."[118] *Knights of Spain* is not merely old, but apparently as wide spread as the folk-ballads themselves; and the story of the courtship, both here and in the variants following, is told wholly in dramatic dialogue.[119] *Green Gravel* has only a two-line suggestion of the ballad of which a Canadian French *ronde* (where all the ladies are dancing except the king's daughter, who "turns her head" to look for her absent lover) is a larger fragment.[120] But in that part of his new edition called "Aftermath," Mr. Newell says, "I do not now regard the game as the reduction of a ballad."[121] He gives no reason whatever for this statement, and the ballad situation still remains in the new fragment he offers. In the new edition he also questions the direct relation of *King William* to the Scandinavian ballad story.[122] But the last line of the Irish round is certainly a bit of ballad survival, and it is even more important for our purpose that the children in Ireland did confuse the round with a ballad and actually played a ballad. At any rate, any one familiar with the ballads will notice many bits of ballad situations in the games.

Besides the ballad situations, the game songs have many reminiscences of ballad style and diction. The "lily-white hand" is as much a commonplace here as in ballads. In *Tread, Tread, the Green Grass* the lad choosing sings,

116. *Games and Songs*, p. 73.
117. *Traditional Games*, I., p. 256.
118. *Games and Songs*, p. 63.
119. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-50.
120. *Ibid.*, pp. 71 and 8.
121. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 247 f.

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"I'll take you by the lily-white hand
And lead you across the sea,"[123]

while in the very modern *Uncle John*, who is so "very sick," occur the lines,

"Takes her by the lily-white hand
And leads her o'er the water,"[124]

both showing not merely the ballad commonplace, but also bits of ballad stories. In *Down She Comes as White as Milk* we have not only this stock comparison and the ballad story, but also the line "He knocks at the door, and picks up a pin," where the last meaningless phrase can only be a corruption of the regulation "pulls" or "tirls at the pin" (*i. e.*, the latch) of the ballad visitor.[125] In the translation of the Venetian round prefixed to the "Histories" we find the stock ballad flower which is to grow out of the grave of Rosetina and her lover.[126] The verse forms are also suggestive. Usually the songs are in couplets, or in four-line stanzas, with the second and fourth lines rhyming or in assonance; that is, in general, children's songs have one or the other of the common ballad verse forms. Moreover, the game songs, because of their dramatic nature, are largely in dialogue and in the present tense, two things characteristic of the ballads. The significance of such suggestions as these for the connection between ballads and children's games must be patent to any one acquainted with ballads.

Mr. Newell is almost ready to lament that even our children are becoming so sophisticated that many of the old games are gradually disappearing. It is getting more difficult to collect material. Much of that for *Games and Songs of American Children* was secured from the memories of people of middle age or more. Mr. Newell notes also that a generation ago kissing and dancing games were the favorite social pleasures in New England country towns, not only for children, but also for young men and women from sixteen to twenty-five.[127]

The rapidity with which these dancing games have disappeared among New England youth is more than paralleled by my

123. Work cited, p. 50.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
127. *Ibid.*, pp. 5 and 6.

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own experience. These games have pactically disappeared from the country neighborhoods of Indiana within the last twenty years. The evangelical conscience was fully as troublesome among Hoosiers as among New Englanders. It was horribly wicked to dance to a fiddle or a piano or an orchestra. But not many parents had such logical consciences that they prohibited their young folk from "playing games" at their parties. So as a boy of fifteen I often danced the Virginia Reel at the houses of Methodist class-leaders and stewards; only we danced to our own music, a choral song, with the old love-game refrain, "Lead her up and down to your best liking." There is not the least doubt we derived greater joy from the active participation in the dramatic song than the finest of orchestras would have given us.

A number of such dance songs were in common use then, but within the last three years I have tried in vain to collect some of them from the young people of the same community. It is possible they may still be found in some more rustic neighborhoods. I am assured on good authority that they are still found in the eastern parts of Kentucky and Tennessee, and I know that the same old songs we used at parties in Indiana were still used for dancing in the State of Washington three years ago. Some of the songs used in Indiana were very old, while others were comparatively recent in origin. The song for the Virginia Reel was probably as old in parts as the original of the dance itself, the old Sir Roger De Coverly *contra* dance. Others going pretty far back were *Weevilly Wheat* and *Pop Goes the Weasel,* while *Captain Jinks* and *We're Marching Down to Rauser's* (evidently a German saloon-keeper who kept "good beer") were more recent. As an example of recent improvisation might be cited a dance-song secured from a resident of a section of the State of Washington locally known as "Rebel Flat," because settled by "unreconstructed" Sortherners after the Civil War. Along with some of the songs mentioned above, one of their favorites was *General Price Goes Riding By,* evidently composed during, or since, the war in honor of their famous Confederate leader.

But the essential thing is that all these dance-songs and the dances with which they are connected are traditional. The homely,

"O, la, Sally, my toes are sore
Dancing on your sandy floor,"

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clearly points back to a time, no one in Indiana can remember, when floors were sanded. In all of them, the dancing, of course, was the chief thing, and part of the popularity of the choral song was due, no doubt, to the fact that it enabled the dancers to outwit the very literal consciences of their elders. But, after all, the song was an essential part of the enjoyment, because, by the vital union of music, words and action, it allowed a more complete, if rudimentary, aesthetic expression. Students of folk-lore owe a debt of gratitude to the strained Puritan conscience that persisted so long in its hatred of the regular dance and of that instrument of the devil, the fiddle; for this very thing has helped the ancient union of song and dance to survive somewhat spasmodically among young people, perhaps, but more generally among children.

Now investigators in literary origins and in folk-lore have had no doubt o fthe value of the dancing games and songs for such problems as that we are engaged upon. Countess Martinengo-Cesaresco asserts that, "The singing game throws much light on the beginnings of scenic representation."[128] Valentin quotes Arwidsson to the effect that the dramatic plan of dancing games and the mimetic representation of epic, *i. e.*, narrative, poems is the germ of a dramatic art.[129] Müllenhoff says that if we want to know what the old choral songs were like the children's games will teach us, and he cites such German games as

"Wer sit in dissen hogen Toeren?"

"Daer sitt ein Konigsdochter in."[130]

Jeanroy says such a dancing game as *Le Chevalier du Guet* reproduces the old ballad dances.[131] It is worth noting as we pass that both of the games just cited are probably derived from ballads. Everyone can see for himself that children's dance songs are eminently dramatic in form and content and in actual dramatic rendition. If, then, they reproduce the old ballad dances, they certainly furnish strong confirmation of the dramatic character of the latter, and that the ballad itself was thought of as dramatic, as something to be acted out.

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128. *Study of Folk Songs*, p. 29.
129. *Studien*, u.s.w., p. 47.
130. *Sagen*, u.s.w., p. xxiv and p. 485.

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VI.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BALLADS FOR THEIR DRAMATIC ELEMENTS.

After this examination of the ballad and its relations on the external, the historical side, it only remains to see whether there is internal confirmation in the ballads themselves, as they have come down to us, for the results already reached from the outside. Such an analysis of the ballads for their dramatic elements is most conveniently made on the basis already used for the division of poetry; that is, on the basis of their relation to the author, their content and their form.

In the first place, it hardly needs pointing out that the popular ballad is strikingly impersonal. All writers agree that this quality is one of the most useful tests for distinguishing the ballad from other poetic forms. Impersonality is a quality belonging to all folk-poetry; it is all written by "anon", but in a peculiar way this is the property of the popular ballad. A very large proportion of the oldest and best ballads have absolutely no subjective references. Of the three hundred and five titles in the Child collection, not more than a third have any personal reference to the singer, and this third contains a large proportion of the poorest ballads. Such references are found in all the Robin Hood ballads; but of the thirty-eight in the cycle, three-fourths are comparatively poor. In general, it may be said that the historical and legendary ballads are more likely to show such signs of the singer than the romantic ballads or the ballads of superstition. Of course, the former are often much later in content; many of them were not born until the singer had begun to separate himself from the singing crowd. The latter more often go back to the ballad-dancing, crowd-singing stage, and it is this class that is the common property of the European nations.

Still such subjective references are found in some even of the oldest and best ballads. At the beginning of a ballad the singer may call for the attention of his listeners, announce his subject,

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the time, or the place, or give a warning; he may conclude with an exhortation, a wish, or an exaltation of his hero; and he may even throw in subjective words or remarks in the course of the action itself.[132] As might be expected, these signs of the individual singer are prominent in the *Gest of Robyn Hode*—an incipient epic. But, though all this attests the growing importance of the individual singer, it is not to be compared to the "I sing" of an art epic like the *Aeneid*. Such a singer of ballads—still one of the people, born of the folk, living among them, singing ballads popular in both matter and style—such a singer must be distinguished from the more professional singer, the one who not only sings the popular poetry, but "improves" it and imitates it for professional reward, the hire of the minstrel proper. It is hard to draw the dividing line, but certainly a large part of the "I's," "we's" and "our's" are still no more than formulas, the conventional common property of all ballad singes, collective or individual.

For the great mass of popular ballads, then, Professor Gummere is right when he says that the "I" of the singer is powerless to affect their pervading impersonal character.[133] The interest of the ballad is wholly objective. We care nothing for the authors. The tricks of style or structure do not suggest any one behind the scenes, do not suggest individual art; they are as traditional as the story itself. Nor is there anything of the elaboration sometimes suggestive of the individual artist in the popular epic. Events and characters stand wholly on their own merits, wholly for themselves. This is the direct opposite of the lyric attitude and is more pronounced than the attitude of the epic. In short, this absolute impersonality of the popular ballad is essentially dramatic.

In content also the ballad shows strong dramatic leanings. Its interest is almost wholly in people, and what they do and feel, and what happens to them; that is, in action in the dramatic sense. There is always a story, always a conflict of interests and always a definite outcome. It is a commonplace of criticism that the ballad jumps into action at once—there are no explanations, no

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132. Cf. Wirth, *Formelhafte und Typische Elemente*, pp. 36 and 50.
133. *Old English Ballads*, p. lxx. For a more thorough discussion see *The Beginnings of Poetry*, pp. 182-189.

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preliminaries, and when the catastrophe is reached the action stops. This is absolutely true of the dialogue ballads and practically true of all good ballads. Even in those ballads that do not begin with dialogue, the opening stanza is no more than stage directions for the action that is to follow. Note, for, example, the first stanza of that excellent and typical ballad, *Der Herr von Falkenstein*,

"Es reit der Herr von Falkenstein
Wohl über ein' breite Heide;
Was sieht er an dem Wege stehm?
Ein Mädel mit weissem Kleide."[134]

Here we have merely the stage seting and the *dramatis personae* for the ballad drama that follows.

The quotation just given illustrates another common characteristic of the ballad, that is, its tendency to make the action dramatically present. It is hardly necessary to point out that the dialogue ballad must do this, but the dramatic intention is seen in the common use of the historical present and present perfect at the beginning and scattered through the very large class of ballads where objective narrative is mixed with dialogue. The dramatic effect of the present tense of the verbs in the first stanza of *Der Herr von Falkenstein*, and especially the effect of the dramatic question in the third line, is most marked. The two together visualize the whole scene for us. The constant use of "saies"[135] in introducing a speech in our own ballads is due to the same dramatic intention that, in reporting a conversation, perpetuates the expression as a dialect vulgarity to-day in the common "says he," "says I."

Again in the true dramatic fashion the ballad selects only the essentials of the action. It emphasizes only those marked events, those elemental passions of men that will help it forward to its end. Subsidiary details are ignored; there is no time to describe Achilles' shield. This, of course, means dramatic rapidity of action. The swing, the rush of ballad action, is proverbial. Examples are hardly needed, because they are in every reader's mind —the early Robin Hood cycle, *Johnie Cock*, *Young Waters* and

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134. White, *Deutsche Volkslieder*, p. 106.
135. Cf., e.g., *Child Waters*, Child, II., p. 85.

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many another good ballad. Such swiftness, such abruptness, is certainly more akin to dramatic movement than to the majestic and equable pace of the epic.

Moreover, the conduct of ballad action is dramatic. There is not a series of stories as in the epic, but one story unified by the actions and fortune of the chief characters. Some of the ballads, like the *Gest*, are, perhaps, on their way toward the epic. But in a typical ballad, like *Johnie Cock,* there is but one story conducted straight through to the dramatic climax, in this case of the fight with the foresters. Like this is the straight-forward action and strong dramatic climax where the avenging maidens declare themselves to their father's murderer in the Danish ballad of *The Twin Sisters.*[136] In the good ballads we are held in dramatic suspense, as in *Lord Randal* and *Hind Horn*; we get the true dramatic surprise, as in *Child Maurice* or the French *Germine.*[137] A beautiful illustration of dramatic action in the ballad may be seen in the fine German parallel to *Lord Randal,* called *Stiefmutter,* where Goethe, who certainly knew both ballad and drama, distinctly recognized my contention, the "excellent dramatic handling."[138] We are in good company, then, when we feel the dramatic power of such a ballad—the unsuspecting tenderness of the father, the agony of the child, the growing mistrust of the father, the implication of the aunt as accomplice, and the final climactic curse on the real murderess, the stepmother. Here, as in all the ballads, we are carried through a dramatic clash of interests—child against parent, lover against family, wife against husband, outlaw against sheriff, Christian against heathen, human against fairy—to a dramatic *denouement.*

The surpassing importance of action in the ballad cannot be denied. Yet the men and women who feel and act claim their due share of interest. How important they are is shown by the ballad titles. But little over a score of the three hundred and five titles in Professor Child's collection are the names of battles, places and things; the rest all refer directly to persons, to actors in the story. It is scarcely necessary to say that ballad characters are never analyzed and are not described in any true sense. The most of

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136. Buchanan, p. 27; or Prior, III., p. 272.
137. Crane, p. 56.
138. Quoted by White, *Deutsche Volkslieder*, p. 307.

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what might pass for description is mere commonplace. Too many ladies have the "middle jimp" and the "lily-white hand" for such phrases to be descriptive. Yet many of the ballad figures are perfectly distinct. We know them as we know the actors on the stage, as we know men and women in real life by what they do and say. Robin Hood and Little John are more than mere names and more than types, they are individuals. The hint of danger makes Johnie Cock all the more eager to go chase the dun deer, and there is no braver figure than Johnie Armstrong, with his

"I'll lay me down for to bleed awhile,
Then I'll rise and fight with you again."

We are as fond of jolly, devil-may-care Kinmont Willie as the "bauld keeper" himself. Fully as bold is that shrewd joker, Sir John, whose hardy audacity so cleverly outwits his rich rival in the Danish balled.[139] Poor Mary Hamilton is no peg to hang a story on, but a real woman even in her defiant gallows speech, the bravery of which is tempered by that fine natural touch—

"And let not my father nor mother get wit
But that I shall come again."

The bravery and firmness of the Maiden in the German ballad already cited,[140] *Der Herr von Falkenstein*, and the proud independence, the unrelenting jeers of the jilted Brown Girl, are very different from the uncomplaining meekness of Fair Annie and the unmercenary faithfulness of Child Water's Ellen. And so the list might go on; but it has gone far enough to show how well we may come to know the people of the ballads through their acts and through their speech. Ballad characters are presented wholly by dramatic methods.

Finally the popular ballads are largely dramatic in form. In the first place, their structure is often strikingly scenic. A good example of this is seen in *Germine*, the French ballad mentioned before.[141] *Germine* is wholly in dialogue, except the first stanza and another line which are no more than stage directions.[142] The ballad may be divided into five distinct scenes, each one requiring a change of place and a change of acting groups. In the first

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139. Prior, III., p. 275.
140. See above, p. 35.
141. Above, p. 36.
142. Cf. p. 28.

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five stanzas we have the passing knights at the house of Germine asking for lodging and that she be their bed-fellow. But she sends them to her mother-in-law's, and between the latter and the knights we have the second scene. Then the mother-in-law goes after Germine, and we have the third scene again at the house of the latter. But Germine refuses to be unfaithful and the mother-in-law goes home, only to be overwhelmed in the fourth scene by the reproaches of one of the knights, who is her son and the husband of Germine in disguise. Then we have the final recognition scene between Germine and her husband at their home. As distinctly scenic as *Germine*, is the Scottish ballad, *The Laird of Warriston*.[143] The first scene here is the successful mercenary courtship, the second is the murder, and the third is the gallows speech. Not so noticeably, perhaps, but still the elements of scenic structure can be seen in such ballads as *The Gay Goshawk*, *Mary Hamilton*, *Hind Horn*, or the Danish *Signelil the Serving Maiden*,[144] or the fine German ballad already twice cited, *Der Herr von Falkenstein*. The handling of such changes of place, people and situation as found in these ballads, and in many others, shows an instinctive appreciation of that dramatic quality or method we call scenic.

Perhaps the strongest evidence in the ballad itself for its dramatic character, however, is the great importance of dialogue. Dialogue is the one essential of dramatic form. When both story and characters come before us largely in the speech of the character themselves we have the most necessary condition for the drama. Now it is a significant fact that every ballad but one—*Bessy Bell and Mary Gray*, which originated as late as the middle of the seventeenth century—every single one but this in the three hundred and five in the Child collection has either dialogue or monologue. The variants and fragments bring the number of versions up to over twelve hundred. That practically all of this enormous number of ballads should have the characters of the story more or less completely speaking for themselves is certainly significant. It can only mean that this dramatic method is an essential characteristic of the ballad.

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143. Version A.
144. Buchanan, p. 7; and Prior III., p. 160.

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On the basis of dialogue handling the ballads may be divided into three chief classes: First, those with objective narrative at the beginning and more or less throughout; second, those with monologue at the beginning and more or less throughout; and third, those with dialogue at the beginning and more or less throughout.[145]

The greater number of ballads, of course, begin with objective narration, but in a large part of such cases the opening stanzas, as has been shown, are practically only stage directions for the dialogue or monologue that follows. There are, to be sure, a few ballads in this class, like *Bonnie George Campbell*, with its lyric tone, nearly altogether in objective narrative; but only *Bessy Bell and Mary Gray* is wholly so. By far the greater number, however, have more dialogue than narrative. To see this it is only necessary to glance at such representative ballads as *Tam Lin, Hind Horn, Our Goodman, Earl Brand, Mary Hamilton, St. Steven and Herod,* and the first fytte of the *Gest.* Very often, too, in these mixed ballads, as those just mentioned show, dialogue or monologue concludes the ballad; that is, the curtain drops with the characters talking. So far as I have been able to examine them, the conditions are the same with those continental ballads, Romance and Germanic, which begin with objective narrative. It has already been shown, for example, that the French *Germine* and the German *Der Herr von Falkenstein,* though beginning with an objective stanza, are practically all dialogue. Like these are the great mass of French and German ballads. The Danish parallel to *Falkenstein, Little Christel and Her Captive Bridegroom,*[146] and the Swedish *Knight Malkom,*[147] represent the same large class among the Scandinavian ballads. In general, then, it is safe to say that there are practically no pure narrative ballads, and the mixed ballads beginning with objective narrative are largely in dialogue.

In the second class, that beginning with monologue, we have

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145. Cf. Wirth, *Formelhafte und Typische Elemente*, p. 48. For the details on which the remainder of this section is based, see *Appendix B.*

146. Prior, II., p. 435.

147. Howitt, I., p. 288.

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the important dramatic device of a leading actor in the story telling the story. Probably Wirth has overestimated the number of this class in the English and Scottish ballads.[148] He puts it at one-sixth of the whole, but the actual number is between thirty and forty. When undoubted dialogue comes into the ballad later on, it is sometimes hard to say whether beginning speeches are meant to be monologue or are part of the dialogue. But there is no doubt about at least a tenth of the English and Scottish ballads, and many of the continental ballads. The French ballad beginning "L'autre jour j'y cheminais,"[149] and the Danish *Hedeby's Ghost* ("I rode until the eventide"),[150] are good examples of monologue with the speeches of others reported. Excellent examples of this form in our own ballads are *Allison Gros, The Wee Wee Man* and *Jamie Douglas.* Others, like the *Brown Girl,* begin with monologue, and then become mixed with objective narrative and dialogue. In all, however, it is the desire of the ballad not to tell the story in the third person, but to bring before us at once an actor who tells his own "moving accidents"; in other words, the intention is dramatic.

The third class, those beginning with dialogue, includes a larger number of ballads than the second class. Nearly a third of the ballads in the Child collection begin with dialogue, and about a dozen of these are wholly in dialogue. The best known of these last are, of course *Lord Randal* and *Edward.* The former, with its parallels, is probably one of the best known ballads in Europe.[151] Its Italian parallel is known to go back for at least two hundred and fifty years. Excellent versions are found among almost all the Germanic nations, and even among the Wends and the Magyars. Such a distribution of a ballad story or situation is not so uncommon, but it is noteworthy that these all seem to be wholly in dialogue form. Such, for example, are the Swedish balled, *The Child's Last Will,*[152] and the German *Stiefmutter,*[153] and *Grosmutter Schlangenk öchin.*[154] The con-

148. *Formelhafte*, u. s. w., p. 48, f.
149. Crane, p. 45.
150. Howitt, I., p. 309; and Prior, III., p. 197.
151. Child, I., p. 151.
152. Howitt, I., p. 265.
153. White, p. 129.
154. Jamieson, p. 230.

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tinental parallels to *Edward*, like the Swedish *The Youth of Rosengard*,[155] also have the complete dialogue form. We can readily understand, too, why *The Maid Freed from the Gallows*,[156] another pure dialogue ballad, should commend itself to the children as excellent stuff for their dramatic games, for our examination of the latter has shown that children love dramatic dialogue. The Swedish parallel to *Our Goodman*, called *The Cruel Brother*,[157] is another excellent example of a pure dialogue ballad, while the Danish parallel, *The Ready Reply*,[158] having merely the last stanza objective, belongs to that large class of dialogue ballads mixed with objective narration, under which our own *Fair Annie, Willie's Lyke-Wake, Young Hunting, The Gay Goshawk* and *The Braes O Yarrow* must be classed.

This surpassing importance of direct speech of the characters in the ballad merely brings to a climax what the analysis of the ballad has already shown in other respects. In relation to the author, as seen in its objectivity and impersonality; in content, as found in its emphasis on action, its elimination of all but the essentials of the action, its rapidity of movement, its use of suspense and climax and in its portrayal of character directly through speech and action; in form, as evidenced in scenic structure and especially in the supreme importance of dialogue—in all the elements necessary to a complete classification the ballad is strikingly dramatic.

155. Howitt, I., p. 273.
156. See above, p. 28.
157. Horwitt, I., p. 261.
158. Prior, II., p. 376.

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VII.

CONCLUSIONS.

In the light of the material presented in the preceding sections, it is hard to see why the dramatic element in the ballad has had so little recognition by students of folk-poetry. The positive declarations for the dramatic element in the ballad are so few that they might almost be disregarded. Still there are some such declarations, though they are not, perhaps, by those best known for their connection with ballad study. Moreover, they remain mere declarations; they are not supported by any analysis of the facts of ballad structure or history.

It is interesting to note that some critics have seen the dramatic element in modern literary ballads, like Rossetti's, for example. In a discussion of Rossetti's *Sister Helen*, Swinburne lays down the general law that "the higher form of ballad requires from the poet at once narrative power, lyrical and dramatic."[159] With an inconsistency too common among those who have proposed definitions of the ballad, it was to be expected, perhaps, that this would be quoted in Murray's *New English Dictionary* to illustrate a definition of the ballad that ignores any dramatic element. The *Century Dicitionary* furnishes a beautiful parallel to Murray's inconsistency, when, to illustrate its definition of the ballad as "a sort of minor epic," it quotes William Sharp as saying, "The ballad is a lyrically dramatic expression of actions and events in the lives of others."[160] Bucheim, in the Golden Treasury collection of *Balladen und Romanzen* (both literary, of course), says "On the whole, it may be said that whilst the epic-lyric element prevails in the latter (Romanzen), the ballad is rather a dramatic-lyrical poem."[161] Now, Swinburne and Sharp and Bucheim are not the greatest of critics, but they know what

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159. *Essays and Studies*, ed. 1875, p. 85.
160. *D. G. Rossetti*, p. 335.
161. *Balladen und Romanzen*, London, 1891, p. xx.

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makes a good modern ballad, and the elements that make a good modern ballad are, in general, those that make a good popular ballad.

More directly applicable, however, are the views of four comparatively recent students of folk-poetry. Miss Katherine Lee Bates says that "the ballad is the parent stock of all poem forms," and "epic, lyric and drama are all inherent in the ballad"; and she declares that "from the ballad of dialogue we look forward to the drama, not only from the ballad of pure dialogue . . . but more remotely from the ballad of mingled dialogue and narration."[162] A reviewer in the *Quarterly,* in the course of a long article based on Professor Child's and Professor Gummere's collections, says that "the early ballad, besides being a song, was, in some respects, a drama."[163] In the new edition, this last year, of the *Games and Songs of American Children,* already so frequently referred to, Mr. Newell reiterates his definition of the ballad first published twenty years ago. With him the ballad is not only "an ancient narration," but it is also "the ancient dramatic ballad"; while his formal definition says, "By the term ballad is properly signified a dance-song, or dramatic poem sung and acted in the dance."[164] In September, 1903, Herr Morf, cited once before on the connection between the folk-song and children's games,[165] declares in set terms, "Die Elemente der lyrischen, epischen und dramatischen Dichtung liegen im Volksliede ungeschieden beisammen; auch ihre Scheidung gehört einer späteren Kulturstufe an."[166]

Such is the extent of the recognition of the dramatic element in the ballad so far as I have been able to gather from a tolerable wide reading in the criticism of folk-poetry. But, as I have pointed out, these declarations are not supported by any direct evidence, and hence they have counted for little in the general chorus ignoring any dramatic element in the ballad. The common conception of the ballad is still that illustrated in Section I; there

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162. *A Ballad Book*, Boston, 1890, pp. xi and xii.
163. *Quarterly Review*, 188: 72.
164. *Games and Songs*, pp. 8 and 9.
165. See above, p. 26.
166. *Arch. f. das Studium der Neueren Sprachen u. Literaturen*, Sep. 1903, p. 156.

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is a general agreement on the presence of the epic element, some recognize a lyric element, while practically all fail to see any dramatic element.

Such failure to recognize one of its essential qualities forces even the best writers on the ballad into difficulties and inconsistencies. Professor Gummere, for example, has already been quoted as saying of an old Frisian ballad dance that "The dramatic action of the dancers was considerable," and "dialogue abounds."[167] But the conclusion he draws on the same page from this and similar instances is that "The main point, however, is this prevailingly narrative character of the oldest ballads, and their inevitable connection with the dance."[168] It is hard to see how we get "this prevailingly narrative character" of the ballads from dramatic action and abounding dialogue. Professor Gummere himself has insisted on the dramatic character of the ballad dance and the reason for it,—"Dramatic action was common enough, for the story was made present and belonged to every singer."[169] One would think that the "inevitable connection" of the ballads with such dances, the "made present and belonged to every singer," would suggest that ballads themselves are something more than prevailingly narrative, that they are dramatic as well. Elsewhere we find a similar recognition and denial in a breath—"the simpler tragic and dramatic motives need no theory of borrowing; human fate and human emotion . . . are enough to account for such epics of the country-side."[170] It is a little difficult for a layman to see how "dramatic motives" may be the basis of "epics" of any kind. Neither is that pervading quality of the ballad, "direct vision,"[171] usually regarded as characteristic of narration. In his latest work he insists that the ballad is a narrative song.[172] Then, in his account of the differentiations of the three poetic forms he says, "in the earliest drama dance, gesture and choral song were the main elements, and the variation from those repeated shouts took, so it would seem, the path of short improvised

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167. See above, p. 18.
168. *Old English Ballads*, p. lxxviii.
169. *Ibid.*, p. lxxxi.
170. *Ibid.*, p. lxvi.
171. *Ibid.*, p. xxix.
172. *Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 175.

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and individual utterance. Those improvised stanzas . . . led to a narrative song, a ballad, and so in time might lead to an epos; but in the making of the stanzas, along with mimicry and dance, there is more of the dramatic than of the epic element."[173] If the last clause is true—and the evidence is all in its favor—how can the ballad be epic and not dramatic? Again, as part of his protest against Ward's view that we have nothing dramatic in English literature before the Conquest, Professor Gummere says in his *Poetics*, "True, dialogue is not drama; but there is enough of action in some of the dialogues to justify . . . the adjective dramatic. . . . Compare, further, two fine English dialogue ballads—*Lord Randal* and *Edward*. . . . The speakers bring out the whole story; but, of course, they do not *act* a story."[174] But, according to his own views, this last is probably just what ballad singers did in every rendition of the ballad, and the text must have been meant for just such rendition; that is, the dramatic intention is in the ballad itself.

Now, it was the function of the section immediately preceding this to show that the statement just made is fundamental. Popular ballads, even as they have come down to us, are so dramatic in their impersonality, in action and characters and methods of presenting them, in scenic quality and dialogue, that it is almost amazing to see how successfully this important element has been left out of the ordinary definition. Because all ballads do tell a story, they are said to be "narrative," "epics in little." But the word "dramatic" suggests a story as well as the word "epic." Sequence of events may be presented dramatically as well as narratively. The dramatic element is too common in all ballads to be the result of a "gradual shading away" from the "pure" narrative ballad. If anything, the process is more likely to have been the other way.[175] The less closely the balled is connected with its original inevitable accompaniment, the dramatic dance, the more it becomes the property of a single reciter, of a professional story-teller, the more important will grow the objective

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173. *Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 428 f.
174. *Poetics*, p. 60.
175. Cf. Wallaschek, *Primitive Music*, p. 214; Gummere, *The Beginnings of Poetry*, pp. 429, 431, 432; Grosse, *The Beginnings of Art*, p. 266.

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element. Originally the ballad is something acted; but as it becomes something told, though still in song, something narrated by one person, the less important will the signs of the original dramatic action become; speeches of the characters of the story, dialogue, will tend to give way to objective narrative. We may grant, perhaps, that the lyric note slowly detaches itself, not from the "pure narrative of the original ballad,"[176] but from the purely objective character (a dramatic element) of the original ballad. But there is no such slow detachment in *Lord Randal* and *Edward* from an originally "pure narrative" form. The dramatic ballad is no degenerate, no mongrel, but a poetic form that can trace its descent back to primitive choric song, where the dancing singers assumed the parts of the gods and heroes they honored.

It is not my intention here to present a new definition of the ballad; that is left for worthier hands. But I shall be satisfied if I have convinced others as well as I have convinced myself that there can be no proper conception of the popular ballad which does not include the dramatic element as one of its fundamentals. The ballad tells a story, often partly in the objective narrative of the epic. It is in lyric verse, and is meant to be sung. But the great importance of the dramatic element in the ballad can be seen from its origin and development, from its connection with the dramatic dance and with the drama, from the strong dramatic character of closely connected parallels, from the dramatic elements brought out by an analysis of the ballad as it has come down to us—dramatic impersonality, dramatic presentation of action and character, dramatic structure and form. In a peculiar way, then, the popular ballad is the best survival of primitive poetry, the best representative of all folk-poetry; it is distinguished from all other poetic types by its unique union of epic, lyric and dramatic elements.

176. Gummere, *Old English Ballads*, p. lxviii.

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APPENDIX A.

THE INFLUENCE OF DRAMATIC FOLK CUSTOMS ON THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN DRAMA.

Practically all writers on the development of the drama seem satisfied that the sole origin of the modern drama is to be found in the mediaeval religious plays and in the classic influence coming through the Renaissance. Chambers, for example, voices the orthodox opinion when he says that "Modern drama arose, by a fairly well-defined line of evolution, from a threefold source, the ecclesiastical liturgy, the farce of the mimes, the classical revivals of humanism."[177] The first was a new influence on dramatic development; the third he rightly calls a "revival" of something that had disappeared, and its influence was not felt until a comparatively short time before the English drama reached its culmination in Shakespeare; but the influence of the second, his addition to the influences on the origin of modern drama, is only conjectural, since the survival of the farce of the mimes from classic times through the Middle Ages is itself only conjectural.[178] Jacob Grimm's attempt to find even the first vague beginnings of the whole of modern drama in dramatic folk ceremonies is to Chambers "demonstrably wrong." Notwithstanding the great space he himself gives to the dramatic customs of the folk, he asserts that in the development of the drama, "Folk-drama contributed but the tiniest rill to the mighty stream."[179]

It is not my intention to support Grimm's theory of dramatic origins any more than Professor Gummere supports his theory of the origin of the ballad. But it seems clear, as shown in Section IV., that a distinct folk-drama did grow directly out of the dramatic choral song and dance and its descendant, the ballad. More-

177. *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. I., p. 182.
178. *Ibid.*, p. 83 ff.
179. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

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over, I believe that the choric song and dance and the dramatic customs of the folk growing out of it, including the dramatic rendition of the ballad, had, in all probability, considerable influence on the origin and development of the religious plays, and, perhaps, some influence on the development of the later drama. In the case of folk-drama, this influence was direct; on these other forms of the drama, it was more indirect.

In view of the undying enmity of the leaders of the Church to the *ludi*, both of the folk and of the minstrels, it is remarkable that the new drama should be born and nourished in the Church itself. One of the established facts in mediaeval religious history is the constant opposition of the devout clergy from the earliest times down to the days of the Puritans to the dramatic customs of the folk, survivals from heathen times. Tertullian in the second century, Bishop Grosseteste in the thirteenth and Archbishop Grindal in the sixteenth, "each alike," as Chambers points out, "voices for his own day the relentless hostility of the austerer clergy during all ages to the ineradicable *ludi* of the pagan inheritance."[180] To the missionaries of Western Europe the choric song and dance of the folk was the greatest and most persistent heathen survival they had to contend with. This persistence was natural enough when we remember that the choric song and dance was the social center of all folk life. It was their one common expression of all community interests, war and labor and love, as well as religion; it had been one of the chief means of binding the primitive community together into a social whole. However thunderous the fulminations of the early churchmen or of the mediaeval reformers, they were never able to stamp out the dramatic choric dance song. It was an immemorial habit with all the sanction of tradition, and it ministered to ineradicable instincts which no ascetics could crush out of human nature. Besides, cult, observance, custom, habit lingers long after belief, after the significance of the custom disappears. The Teutonic and Keltic peoples changed their gods, but it was centuries before they changed the customs of their heathen days. Instead of disappearing, these customs tended to attach themselves to the new

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180. Work cited, I, p. 419, and cf. Vol. II., *Appendix N.*; cf. also Müllenhoff, *De Antiquissima, passim.*

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faith, the new worship. One of the great scandals of the mediaeval Church was that on the feasts and vigils of Christendom the people violated the sanctuary itself with the habitual folk-song and folk-dance of the village green. The denunciations of "cantica diabolica," "amatoria carmina vel cantilenae," "lusu saeculari," "choras secularium," "historicae saltationes, obscoeni motus, seu choreae," began as soon as the missionaries began their work, for they knew all these customs had a heathen origin, that "de paganorum observatione remansit." The struggle was protracted through the centuries, but the Church never entirely succeeded in driving out the choric dances even from the sanctuaries, and the old invasion survives to-day at some places on the Continent.[181]

When we consider the unceasing hostility of the Church toward the dramatic customs of the folk, some further explanation of the origin of the religious drama seems necessary. Scholars have been so happy over the extraordinary chance to isolate the development of a literary form that they have unduly emphasized the isolation. Generally they are so well satisfied with the clear chain of development from the first simple trope up to the morality verging on interlude and regular drama, that they have neglected some of the influences determining the birth of the new form. But, the attitude of the Church being what it was, why was the first trope, itself a form of choric song and action, allowed to become a part of the service? Why did the officials of the Church foster the liturgical drama? It has been assumed that the desire to instruct, to edify, was a motive wholly sufficient to account for this remarkable facing about of the clergy. But how did they know this was the best form for such instruction? The answer is plain. They had seen the great power over the folk of the rude dramatic performance of their choral songs and ballads. Made wise by experience, they had learned by long struggle to respect the power of an opponent that would not down, and they determined to use the devil's weapons against himself. They would minister directly to the inextinguishable instinct of their rude auditors for the dramatic, and at the same time they would give the truth of the sacred story; that is, they would substitute

181. Chambers, work cited, I., pp. 161-163.

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a Christian performance for one of heathen origin. Doubtless a contributory but unconscious influence toward a dramatic performance in the liturgy was given by the rebellion of the starved and repressed instinct for the dramatic in their own breasts. The desire to instruct was no new thing. That alone would not account for such an inconsistent reversal of attitude on their part. The particular form once suggested from the outside, the reassertion of the dramatic instinct in themselves would foster its gratification in the only way possible to them without scandal; that is, in the service itself. But the best explanation for the original suggestion toward a dramatic performance in the service, and for the complete justification of their obvious inconsistency, was the conscious desire of the clergy to destroy a performance of heathen origin by substituting for it a similar Christian performance, and to take over for the advantage of the Church a custom of such proved power over the folk.

Such an explanation of the origin of the religious plays has found but little expression, and even less support, where expressed. Chambers suggests a similar explanation several times, but does not offer any direct support for it. In one place he asserts that the liturgical drama had its motive in a desire for devotion and the edification of the vulgar, but suggests that "the hope of affording a counter-attraction to the spring and winter *ludi* of hard-dying paganism probably went for something.[182] Again he says we may look at the origin of the liturgical drama "either as an audacious, and at least partly successful, attempt to wrest the pomps of the devil to a spiritual service, or as an inevitable and ironical recoil of a barred human instinct within the hearts of its gaolers themselves."[183]

One would think that the mass of material Chambers has collected on the connection between heathen and Christian customs would suggest the desirability of some definite support for the first part of this last statement. Certainly the whole history of the mediaeval Church furnishes such support. Nothing is clearer than that it was the general policy of the early Church to bring the heathen to Christianity by the easy substitution for pagan customs and observances of similar Christian customs and obser-

182. Work cited, II., pp. 97-98.
183. *Ibid.*, II., p. 3.

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vances. The command of Pope Gregory to St. Augustine was not to destroy the heathen fanes, but to turn them into temples of the true God, so that the people would have no need to change their places of concourse.[184] The great pagan and heathen festivals became Christian holy-days. The pagan winter feast was changed to the Christian celebration beginning with All Saints Day and ending with Twelfth Night. Germanic Yule-tide and Roman Kalends became the Christmas of the new religion. The yule-log, the Christmas candles, the holly, the mistletoe, the gifts, and even Santa Claus himself, are pagan. The heathen Eoster-daeg became the Resurrection Day of the Church. The exploits and characters of the heathen deities and heroes were assumed by Christ and the Virgin and the saints. In every way it was the attempt of the Church to make the change to the new religion as easy as possible. If a heathen custom could be kept merely by giving it a new name, so much the better; if this was not possible, and it could not be stamped out, then the attempt might be made to draw the people away from the old custom by offering something similar directly from the Church.

In his account of the invasion of the churches by folk-dance and folk-song at the festal period of Christmas and New Year, Chambers gives an excellent example of such substitution. "Hopeless of abolishing such customs," he says, "the clergy tried to capture them. The Christmas crib [in the liturgical plays] was rocked to the rythms of a dance, and . . . great Latin hymns . . . became the parents of a long series of festival songs, half sacred, half profane. In Germany these were known as *Wiegenlieder,* in France as *noels,* in England as carols; and the latter name makes it clear that they are but a specialized development of those *caroles* or *rondes* which, of all mediaeval *chansons,* come nearest to the type of Germano-Keltic folk-song."[185] In *St. Stephen and Herod, Judas, The Cherry-Tree Carol* and *The Corval and the Crane* Professor Child gives examples of folk-ballads of such origin. In his introduction to the first, he accounts for the fact that St. Stephen is a stable groom in the Scandinavian ballads, and that on his day, December 26, horse racing was universal in Sweden, by saying that "The horse was sacred to Frey

184. Quoted by Chambers, I., p. 95.
185. *Ibid.*, I., p. 272.

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and Yule was Frey's festival. There can be no doubt that the customs connected with St. Stephen's day are a continuation, under Christian auspices, of old rites and habits which, as in so many other cases, the Church found it easier to consecrate than to abolish."[186] Such being the general policy of the Church, we should expect it to apply in the origin of the religious plays. Easter and Christmas were just the periods when the old customs of the folk were strongest, and, therefore, when the substitution was most needed. The coincidence is surely significant when it is seen that just at these seasons drama first found a lodgment in the liturgy. That the general policy of the Church did apply here, that the choric song and dance and the dramatic rendition of the ballad by the folk was of decided influence on the origin of the religious drama, seems at least highly probable.

So much space has been given to the influence of the dramatic customs of the folk on the origin of the church drama that not much is left for a consideration of their influence on the further development of the drama. The connection here is not so direct nor, perhaps, so important. For any further development of the church plays it was necessary for them, like the carols, to pass into the possession of the people. The first step in this direction was the gradual substitution of the vernacular for Latin in the liturgical plays. The Latin of the liturgy was incomprehensible to the people, and hence so much the less capable of competing with the customs still flourishing in survival from the old heathen ritual. The expansion of the plays soon made necessary a larger number of actors than the clergy themselves could supply, for example, in the *Prophetae*. The laity were quick to offer their services, and the foremost would be such as had most enjoyed participation in the rude dramatic performances of the folk.[187] With the addition of lay performers and the increasing popularity with the lay audience, the necessity for the vernacular continued to grow stronger until the Latin in a fully developed play of the cycles became a mere survival. It has been pointed out that the Christmas crib of the early Nativity-play was "rocked to the rythm of a dance." This direct tribute to the power of the folk-dance continued as late even as the performance of at

186. Vol. I., pp. 235-236.
187. Cf. Gummere, *Poetics*, pp. 59-60.

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least two of the Digby cycle of plays. The secularization of the plays was aided, also, by further reactions from folk customs. The burlesque mimicries of the Feast of Fools, the Feast of the Ass and the Boy Bishop in the churches grew out of folk customs, and the reaction from these burlesques was soon felt on the religous plays. The interpolation of Balaam and the ass in the *Prophetae* is a "reaction of the Feast of fools upon the *Prophetae* . . . an attempt to turn the established presence of the ass in the church to purposes of edification."[188] Such influence accounts also for the use of the ass with the ox in the Nativity-play, while the "raging" of Herod and the increasing importance of devils and imps are to be attributed to the same source. The comic *Mercator* appearing in some of the later plays and found in his first form in some versions of the *Quem queritis*, is related, so Chambers thinks, to the comic quack doctor of the spring folk-drama.[189] The increase of such secular and comic elements, of the more broadly human elements as contrasted with the religious elements, an increase brought about partly by the reaction of folk customs upon the plays and partly by the insistent demands of the strong native dramatic instinct of the folk, made the clergy all the more willing to part with the plays and the folk all the more eager to take possession of them. The result at last was that a dramatic form, originated to destroy the dramatic efforts of the folk, was taken wholly into their own hands, and used no longer for instruction, but purely for pleasure.

Popular customs influenced other and later phases of the drama as well as the religious plays. It was from the *bourgeois* form of the folk *ludi* that the domestic fools and jesters and the lords or abbots of misrule came; it was from the same source that the sixteenth century masque originated.[190] Moreover, folk customs and folk literature may, perhaps, have exercised some influence on the regular drama. The *Old Wives Tale* is evidence that the immediate predecessors of Shakspere were interested in popular material. In the opinion of Gervinus, a prophet not always honored out of his own country, it is the influence of the ballad that best explains certain characteristics of the early Eliz-

188. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, II., p. 59.
189. *Ibid.*, II., p. 91.
190. *Ibid.*, I., pp. 400-401.

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abethan plays. He distinctly calls such plays as Peele's *Edward I.*, Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV.*, and Greene's *Pinner of Wakefield* "ballad pieces." "In such pieces," he says, "the ballad with its bold touches treads upon the stage, merely put into dialogue."[191] He points out that these plays are merely a series of scenes in the ballad manner. The poet not only used popular material in such plays as *The Pinner of Wakefield*, but he used it in a popular manner and in a popular spirit different alike from the conventional tone of the church plays and from that of the classic drama, the two sources usually supposed sufficient to account for the Elizabethan drama. Without giving too much weight to all this, it may be said that the influence of the ballad and of the popular secular plays originating in them is at least a suggestive, if partial, explanation for the free bold movement, the over-leaping of time and space, the sinking of the scholar and writer in the action and actors, the absence of all moralizing, for the romantic tone of the later drama, which could not come wholly from the miracle plays or from the classic drama. In may be said, then, in conclusion, that the choric song and dance, its derivative, the ballad, and other customs of the folk closely related to them, have influenced the development of the drama, certainly in the popular secular plays, probably in the church plays and, perhaps, in the regular drama; and this influence was made possible because these various folk customs had in themselves a strong dramatic element.

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191. *Shakespeare Commentaries*, London, 1863, Vol. I., pp. 105-106

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APPENDIX B.

LISTS OF BALLADS ALTOGETHER IN DIALOGUE OR MONOLOGUE, OR BEGINNING WITH DIALOGUE OR MONOLOGUE.

In the following lists the number at the left is the number for the ballad in the Child collection. The capital letters refer to the variants under each number as listed by Professor Child; when no capital is used there is but one version. A small letter "a" in parenthesis indicates that the versions under any particular number preceding it are altogether in dialogue or monologue; a small "b" in parenthesis shows that the preceding versions begin with dialogue or monologue but later have some objective narrative; a small "d" in connection with "a" indicates that the monologue speaker reports dialogue. Ballads not included in these lists begin with some form of objective narrative.

I.
DIALOGUE.

1. D. (a)
2. F. G. H. (a).
3. A. B. (b).
4. F. G. (b).
7. B. C. D. G. I. (b).
12. A. to S. U. (a).
13. A. B. C. (a).
15. B. (b).
17. G. H. (b).
20. M. (a).
25. A. B. C. D. E. (b).
34. B. (b).
36. (b).
38. I. N. (b).
41. C. (b).
43. B. D. E. (b).
49. D. I. (b).
53. G. K. (b).
58. M. (b).
62. A. C. D. E. F. H. I. J. (b).
63. B. C. E. H. (b).
64. A. B. D. F. G. (b).
65. G. (b).
68. A. H. I. J. (b).
69. D. (b).
73. C. (b).
75. A. E. (b).
76. H. I. J. (a); B. D. E. F. (b).
78. C. (a); A. B. D. E. F. G. (b).
81. B. F. I. (b).
86. B. (b).
91. A. B. C. D. E. F. G. (b).
93. O. T. Y. (b).
95. A. C. D. F. G. H. J. (a); B. E. I. K. (b).
96. A. C. D. E. (b).
97. B. C. (b).
99. H. (b).
100. B. E. (b).
107. B. (b).

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110. J. L. (b).
120. A. (b).
140. A. (b).
142. A. (b).
157. A. B. C. D. I. (b).
170. E. (b).
171. (b).
173. Z. (b).
178. B. C. (b).
181. B. (b).
187. B. C. (b).
188. D. E. (b).
194. C. (b].
195. A. B. (b).
196. B. (b).
197. (a).
203. B. D. (b).
206. (b).
209. F. H. I. J. K. N. (b).
212. A. B. E. (b).
214. O. P. (a); A. (b).
215. A. C. D. E. G. (b).
216. A. B. (b).
226. C. G. (b).
228. A. (b).
233. A. B. (b).
235. E. (b).
236. F. (b).
238. I. (b).
239. A. B. (b).
240. A. B. C. D. (b).
243. B. C. D. E. F. G. (b).
247. (b).
248. (b).
264. (b).
265. (b).
267. B. (b).
279. A. (b).
280. A. (b).
281. D. (b).
286. C. (b).
288. B. (b).
292. (b).
293. E. (b).
297. (b) or (a).
298. (b).
301. (b).
305. C. (b).

Total. 87

II.
MONOLOGUE BALLADS.

2. K. L. (a).
5. C. D. H. (b).
9. C. (b).
15. A. (b).
17. B. (b).
18. D. (b).
20. N. (b).
27. (a).
35. (a, d).
38. A. to G. (a, d).
39. M. (b).
40. (a, d).
58. L. (a, d).
71. (b).
106. (b).
108. (b).
111. (b).
163. A. B. (b).
172. (a).
173. P. Q. R. AA. BB. (a); E. F. H. J. U. V. Y. (b).
177. (b).
183. (a, d).
186. (a).
191. F. (a).
204. A. to L. (a, d).
229. A. B. (b).
232. D. (b).
249. (b).
256. (b).
263. (b).
274. B. (b).
281. C. (b).
293. A. B. C. (b).
295. A. B. (b).

Total. 34

Total, Dialogue and Monologue.....121

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*As the preceding pages had gone to press before this admirable collection of the ballads appeared, I have not been able to refer in the body of my text to Professor Kittredge's excellent general *Introduction.*

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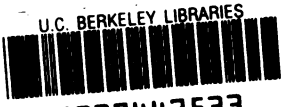

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